



May 20, 1982

Dear Editor:

A new source of information about microcomputer courseware and other resources available for computer education in elementary and secondary schools will soon be available. Called RICE (Resources in Computer Education), it is a computerized data base. Initially, educators will be able to access and search the data base through the School Practices Information Network (SPIN) operated by BRS, Inc.

The RICE data base has been developed over the past three years by the Computer Technology Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, with support from the National Institute of Education.

Accessing and searching of RICE is being tested during May-August 1982. In September, two RICE files will be fully operational:

1. Courseware, containing descriptions of some 2,000 microcomputer products
2. Producers, containing information on some 150 producers of microcomputer instructional and administrative software products

Three additional files will become operational in 1983:

1. Computer Literacy, containing instructional objectives and test items for computer education
2. Project Register, containing descriptions of school projects in elementary and secondary computer applications
3. Inventory, containing numbers of student stations and other data on installations of hardware in schools

The enclosed packet includes a news release announcing availability of the new RICE data base and fact sheets providing additional information about various elements of it.

Please contact either of us if you would like further information. BRS, Inc. can be contacted at 1200 Route 7, Latham, New York 12110.

Sincerely,

Judith Edwards Allen
Judith Edwards Allen
Director, Computer Technology
Program

Jerry D. Kirkpatrick
Jerry D. Kirkpatrick, Director
Office of Institutional Development
and Communications

JEA/JDK:dm

Enclosures

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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

NEW SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT
COMPUTER EDUCATION RESOURCES GOES ONLINE

PORTLAND, OREGON--Educators will have a new source of information about computer education resources when the RICE data base goes online in September (1982).

"RICE is the most comprehensive data base available on microcomputer software for use in elementary and secondary education," explains Judith Edwards Allen, Director of the Computer Technology Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). When the data base goes online for public access, information will be available on some 2,000 microcomputer courseware items. "That is most of what exists that is worthwhile at this time," adds Edwards Allen.

RICE, which stands for Resources in Computer Education, has been designed and developed over the past three years by NWREL with support from the National Institute of Education. The initial installation of RICE is on BRS, Inc.'s School Practices Information Network (SPIN), which provides search and retrieval services for more than 50 information files. Information about procedures for accessing the RICE data base is available from BRS, Inc., 1200 Route 7, Latham, New York 12110.

Operation of the RICE computer-based information system is currently undergoing a four-month field test. When public access begins in September, educators will be able to search RICE using procedures similar to those currently used to conduct an ERIC search. Most searches are expected to cost less than \$5, based on computer time used.

(more)

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It is expected that most computer searches of the RICE data base will be by organizations such as school districts, intermediate education units and state education agencies which provide these services to teachers and other staff members in their districts or schools, explains Edwards Allen.

Ultimately the RICE information base will include five categories, or "files." In addition to the file on computer based courseware, a second file of more than 150 producers or developers of microcomputer software will also be operational in September. Three other files will be added in 1983:

- o Computer Literacy, containing objectives and test items for computer education
- o Project Register, containing descriptions of school projects in K-12 computer applications
- o Inventory, containing numbers of student stations and other data on installation of hardware in schools

Searches of the files can be conducted using ERIC descriptors, or more than 20 other categories, such as the type of hardware the materials are used on, grade level, and mode of instruction (drill, simulation, etc.).

The Northwest Laboratory has established a national network of 26 educational institutions as the primary source of descriptive and evaluative information about software packages. Commercially developed materials are included in the RICE data base.

NWREL has developed a process for evaluating the content and instructional quality of microcomputer software materials. Some 200 of the 2,000 courseware packages described in RICE have been evaluated by staff members at these institutions using the NWREL evaluation procedure. The "Evaluator's Guide for Microcomputer-Based Instructional Packages," which describes the process and provides evaluation instruments, has been published by the International Council for Computers in Education at the Department of Computer and Information Science, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403 (\$2.50 for single copy with quantity discounts). It also is available through ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center document ED 206 330).

Information about the RICE data base is available from Judith Edwards Allen, Director, Computer Technology Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 300 S.W. Sixth Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97204.

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How is Information
Entered Into RICE?

Providers of information may differ from file to file. Providers may enter information either directly online or by sending it to the RICE staff who will enter it at the Laboratory. In either case, information is entered in predefined formats into a temporary file where it can be edited by NWREL staff members, who control its entry into the permanent file for access by users of the system.

The Laboratory has established a Network of 26 educational institutions serving elementary and secondary schools as the primary source of input of descriptive and evaluative information about software packages. All are directly involved in providing computer related services to school districts.

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RICE: Resources in Computer Education
(Sample Search Session)



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Reproduced below is a sample search procedure.

<u>Search Interaction</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Computer: ENTER BRS PASSWORD User: 123456	The agency's code number is entered.
Computer: SIGN ON IS COMPLETE 03/31/82 10:10:45 ENTER DATABASE NAME User: RICE	
Computer: BRS-SEARCH MODEL-ENTER QUERY User: 1: Mathematics	
Computer: RESULT 721 User: 2: Middle Schools	Information is available about 721 software packages in mathematics.
Computer: RESULT 587 User: 3: APPLE II	Information is available about 587 software packages at the Middle School level.
Computer: RESULT 815 User: 4: 1 and 2 and 3	Information is available about 815 software packages which operate on an Apple II microcomputer.
Computer: RESULT 53	Information is available about 53 software packages which have all three descriptors above.
User: 5: Print 4TI, MI/DOC=1-10	Request to print items in query #4 by Title and Mode of Instruction for the first 10 documents.
Computer: 1 TI Mathematics Drill & Practice MI Drill and Practice; Tutorial; Learning Management	
2 TI Basic Math Facts and Games MI Drill and Practice; Game (etc. through math document)	
END OF DOCUMENT	
User: Print 4 All/Doc=All/ID	Request to print all items in this combination of descriptors offline have a printed copy sent by mail.
OFF	

The RICE Information Base

RICE computer system is an information base, with related inquiry and update software, designed to provide information about the state of the art in the application of computers in schools.

Five categories (or "files") comprise the information:

- o Producers, which includes all commercial and noncommercial producers of computer-based instructional and administrative software
- o Software Packages, which contains descriptive and evaluative information about known products from producers
- o Computer Literacy, which contains objectives and test items
- o Inventory, which contains numbers of student stations and other data on installations of hardware in schools
- o Project Register, which contains descriptions of school projects in K-12 computer applications

Computer software necessary to use RICE includes the sorting and other data-base management software required to build and maintain the computer files, and the query software required to allow users to easily access, manipulate and retrieve the information in useful forms.

The initial installation of RICE is on the computer system of BRS, Inc., a company providing search and retrieval services for over 50 information files. Educators will be able to use RICE and the other files economically through the School Practices Information Network operated by BRS.

The information providers may differ from file to file. It is anticipated that the providers will be able to enter information either directly online or by sending it to RICE staff who will enter it. In either case, the data to be added will be entered in predefined formats into a temporary file where it can be edited by staff members, who will also control its entry into the permanent file for access by users of the system.

Information users will be provided with several means to obtain information from the system including print media and online access to the RICE computer. Through the online access, users will be able to search various categories of information for specific items of need or to obtain predefined reports designed by MicroSIFT staff who synthesize information and provide overviews or summaries. Agencies may wish to obtain reports online and then provide the information to their constituents through print media. It is anticipated that most of the direct access to the system will be by organizations such as regional education agencies, large school districts and state education agencies, which will provide search services to their constituent districts or schools.

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Evaluation of
Microcomputer Software



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A process for evaluating microcomputer courseware for elementary and secondary schools has been developed at the MicroSIFT (Microcomputer Software and Information for Teachers) Clearinghouse operated by the Computer Technology Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Evaluation data and other information derived from the review of courseware is entered into the RICE (Resources in Computer Education) data base. Two forms are used to record information.

- o The Courseware Description form identifies the factual information necessary for evaluation and use of a package, including source, ability level, subject, mode of instruction, required hardware and software, instructional objectives and prerequisites.
- o The Courseware Evaluation form contains a list of 21 points in the three categories of content, instructional quality and technical quality.

An "Evaluator's Guide for Microcomputer-Based Instructional Packages" describes the use of the forms and provides guidelines, suggestions and interpretations of each item on the Evaluation form. The book is designed to be used by teachers and others in evaluating microcomputer courseware.

Materials evaluated for the MicroSIFT Clearinghouse go through three stages of evaluation:

1. Sifting--This is a first look at a package to determine that it is instructional in nature, will actually operate without problems on the appropriate microcomputer, and is complete with instructions.
2. Description--A package passing stage 1 successfully is described, using the Description form.
3. Peer Review--Teachers with experience in the subject and grade or ability level of the material are selected to evaluate packages according to the Evaluation form.

Copies of the "Evaluator's Guide" are available from the International Council for Computers in Education, Department of Computer and Information Science, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403. Cost per copy is \$2.50 (1-5 copies), \$2.25 (6-10), \$2.00 (11-30), \$1.75 (31-50), \$1.50 (51-100) and \$1.25 (more than 100 copies). It also is available through ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center document ED 206 330).



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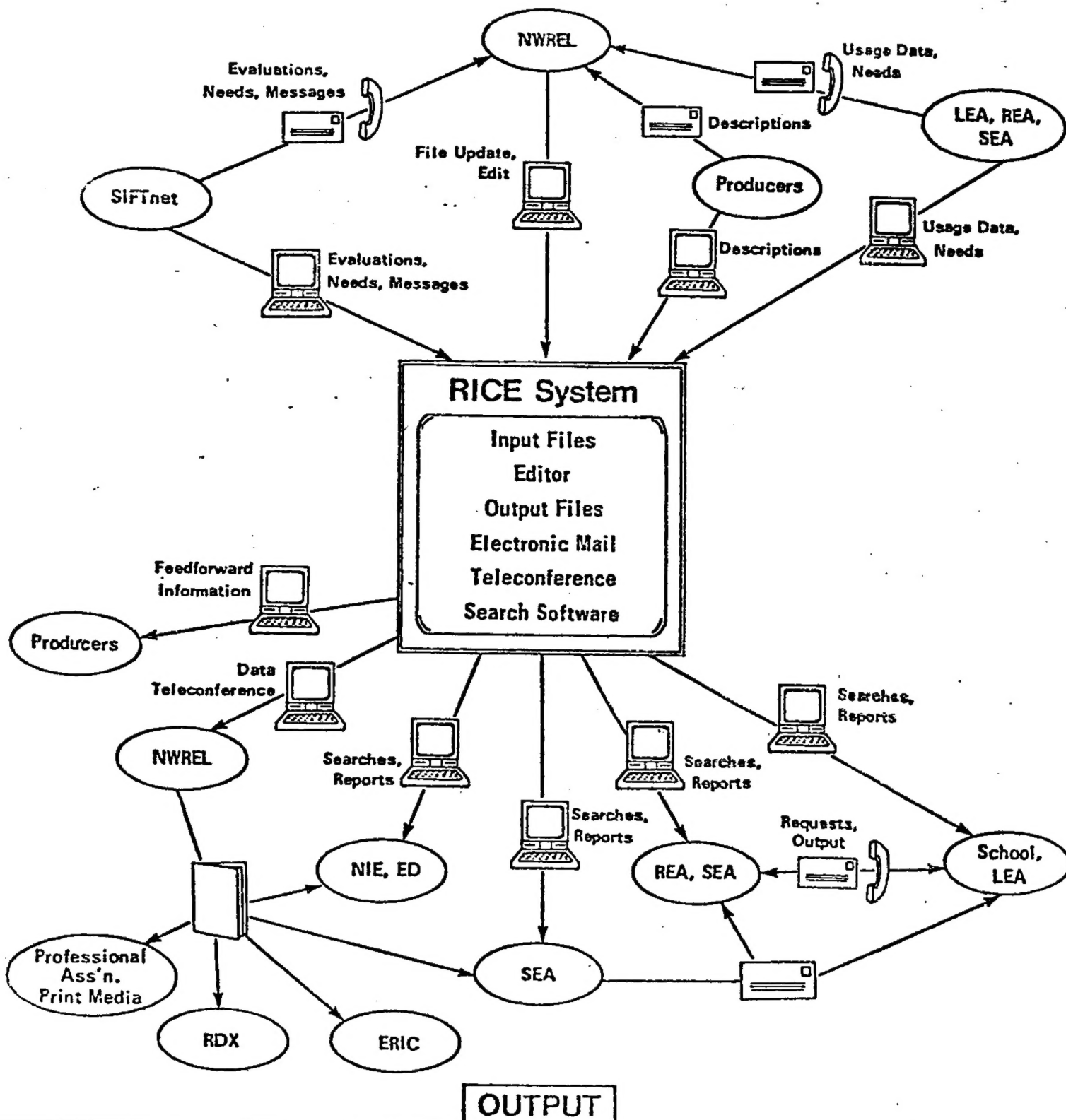
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RICE Interaction

INPUT





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Computer: RESULT 587 User: 3: APPLE II	Information is available about 587 software packages at the Middle School level.
Computer: RESULT 815 User: 4: 1 and 2 and 3	Information is available about 815 software packages which operate on an Apple II microcomputer.
Computer: RESULT 53	Information is available about 53 software packages which have all three descriptors above.
User: 5: Print 4TI, MI/DOC=1-10	Request to print items in query #4 by Title and Mode of Instruction for the first 10 documents.
Computer: 1 TI Mathematics Drill & Practice MI Drill and Practice; Tutorial; Learning Management	
2 TI Basic Math Facts and Games MI Drill and Practice; Game (etc. through math document)	
END OF DOCUMENT	
User: Print 4 All/Doc=All/ID	Request to print all items in this combination of descriptors offline have a printed copy sent by mail.
OFF	

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How to Access
The RICE Data Base


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Anyone wishing to conduct an online search of the RICE (Resources in Computer Education) data base can do so using any terminal or microcomputer equipment. It is anticipated that most of the direct access to the system will be by organizations such as school districts, intermediate education units and state education agencies which provide search services to their constituent districts or schools.

First, the agency must join the School Practices Information Network (SPIN). There is no cost to join the Network. Applications can be obtained from BRS, Inc., 1200 Route 7, Latham, New York 12110.

BRS will issue an identification number and password, and provide an information packet on access and search procedures.

The only equipment needed by a school district or other agency to conduct searches is a computer terminal or microcomputer with communications interface. The cost of the communications equipment is \$300 and up.

A local telephone number will be available in most cities to access the data base without a long distance call. The search is conducted using ERIC and other descriptors.

The only cost for the search is a charge per minute of computer time used. Typically, the cost of a search will be less than \$5. There is no minimum monthly charge or flat fee.